

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listing of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1-30. (Canceled)

31. (Currently Amended) In a system having a storage system that is owned by an owner and rented to a user, a method for renting and charging for the use of the storage system comprising the steps of:

providing the user with an initial volume of storage space of the storage system, the storage system being held at a site of the user and not at a site of the owner, wherein the storage system held at the user's site has a management table which stores information regarding a state of use of disk drives, and wherein the owner obtains information of the management table from the user's site;

charging the user for use of the initial volume at a predetermined rate;

providing an additional~~added~~ volume of storage space of the storage system as needed by the user; and

charging the user for a portion of the additional~~added~~ volume that is actually used by the user at a first rate and charging the user for a remainder of the additional volume that is not actually used by the user at a second rate different from the first rate;

wherein the owner of the storage system is notified when the user begins using a portion of the additional~~added~~ volume, and

~~_____ further comprising the step of:~~

~~_____ copying data stored in a first portion of the storage system into a second portion of the storage system and charging the user for the use of the second portion of the storage system at a rate lower than for use of the first portion of the storage system.~~

32. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 31, wherein the charging to the user for the additional volume according to the first and second rates occurs after a fixed period of time determined by a contract, ~~the user is charged for the portion of the added volume actually used and a percentage of the portion of added volume that is not used.~~

33. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 31, wherein ~~information about the state of use of the storage system by the user is recorded in a management table, and wherein the state of use information stored in the management table is used in order to determine how much the user is to be charged for renting the storage system.~~

34. (Canceled)

35. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 31, further comprising the steps of:

providing a display terminal to the user; and
providing a display terminal to the owner;
wherein both the user's display terminal and owner's display terminal are connected to the storage system via the internet so that both terminals can receive information regarding the state of use of the storage system by the user.

36. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 32, ~~wherein information about the state of use of the storage system by the user is recorded in a management table, and~~ wherein the state of use information stored in the management table is used in order to determine how much the user is to be charged for renting the storage system.

37. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 36, further comprising the steps of:

providing a display terminal to the user; and
providing a display terminal to the owner;
wherein both the user's display terminal and owner's display terminal are connected to the storage system via the internet so that both terminals can receive information regarding the state of use of the storage system by the user.

38-43. (Canceled).

44. (New) A method for renting and charging for the use of a storage system to a user by an owner of the storage system, the method comprising the steps of:

providing the storage system at a site of the user, the storage system having a management table which stores information regarding a state of use of disk drives;

providing access to the management table by the owner;

providing the user with an initial volume of storage space of the storage system,

charging the user for use of the initial volume at a first rate;

providing the user with an additional volume of storage space of the storage system;

charging the user for a portion of the additional volume that is actually used by the user at a second rate and charging the user for a remaining portion of the additional volume that is not actually used by the user at a third rate different from the second rate; and

notifying the owner of the storage system when the user begins using a portion of the additional volume.

45. (New) The method according to claim 44, wherein the charging to the user for the additional volume according to the second and third rates occurs after a fixed period of time determined by a contract.

46. (New) The method according to claim 44, wherein the state of use information stored in the management table is used in order to determine how much the user is to be charged for renting the storage system.

47. (New) The method according to claim 44, further comprising the steps of:

providing a display terminal to the user; and

providing a display terminal to the owner;

wherein both the user's display terminal and owner's display terminal are connected to the storage system via the internet so that both terminals can receive information regarding the state of use of the storage system by the user.

48. (New) The method according to claim 45, wherein the state of use information stored in the management table is used in order to determine how much the user is to be charged for renting the storage system.

49. (New) The method according to claim 48, further comprising the steps of:

providing a display terminal to the user; and

providing a display terminal to the owner;

wherein both the user's display terminal and owner's display terminal are connected to the storage system via the internet so that both terminals can receive information regarding the state of use of the storage system by the user.

50. (New) A method for renting and charging for the use of a storage system to a user by an owner of the storage system, the method comprising the steps of:

providing the storage system at a site of the user, the storage system having a management table which stores information regarding a state of use of disk drives;

providing access to the management table by the owner;

providing the user with a volume of storage space of the storage system;

charging the user for a portion of the volume that is actually used by the user at a first rate and charging the user for a remaining portion of the volume that is not actually used by the user at a second rate different from the first rate; and

notifying the owner of the storage system when the user begins using a portion of the volume.

51. (New) The method according to claim 50, wherein the charging to the user for the volume according to the first and second rates occurs after a fixed period of time determined by a contract.

52. (New) The method according to claim 50, wherein the state of use information stored in the management table is used in order to determine how much the user is to be charged for renting the storage system.

53. (New) The method according to claim 50, further comprising the steps of:

providing a display terminal to the user; and

providing a display terminal to the owner;

wherein both the user's display terminal and owner's display terminal are connected to the storage system via the internet so that both terminals can receive information regarding the state of use of the storage system by the user.

54. (New) The method according to claim 51, wherein the state of use information stored in the management table is used in order to determine how much the user is to be charged for renting the storage system.

55. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 54, further comprising the steps of:

providing a display terminal to the user; and

providing a display terminal to the owner;

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wherein both the user's display terminal and owner's display terminal are connected to the storage system via the internet so that both terminals can receive information regarding the state of use of the storage system by the user.